UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Security Council expresses readiness to set up transitional authority, international force to aid implementation of basic agreement signed by Croatia and Serbs.

* Bosnian Government army soldiers are reported to have looted United Nations base in Bihac pocket in northwestern Bosnia.

* Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali, in Canada, says member States have unique forum for dialogue in United Nations.

* Secretary-General calls on international community to demonstrate solidarity with people of Sierra Leone

* Representatives of 150 Governments to meet in Vienna next week to consider further reductions in ozone-depleting chemicals.

* Asia-Pacific governments and non-governmental organizations address threats to environment.

* United Nations Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development introduces new online information service.

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The Security Council has welcomed the Basic Agreement on the Region of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium in Croatia, signed between the Government of Croatia and the local Croatian authorities.

Unanimously adopting resolution 1023 (1995), late Wednesday night, the Council stated its readiness to consider the request by the parties to the Agreement to establish a Transitional Administration and to authorize an appropriate international force to facilitate the implementation of the Agreement. The Council stressed the need for the Government of Croatia and the local Serb party to cooperate fully on the basis of the Agreement and refrain from any military activity or any measures that might hinder the implementation of the transitional arrangements. It reminded them of their obligation to cooperate fully with the United Nations Confidence Restoration

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For information media—not an official record

Operation in Croatia (UNCRO) and to ensure its safety and freedom of movement.

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Bosnian Government army soldiers were reported to have looted a United Nations base in the Bihac pocket in northwestern Bosnia. United Nations Radio in the former Yugoslavia reported that about 100 Bosnian Government soldiers shot at and looted the Bangladesh Battalion logistics base in Velika Kladusa. Reinforcements in Saxon armoured vehicles were dispatched from Bihac Command to assist the 80 unarmed Bangladeshi soldiers and United Nations Military Observers who were held by the Bosnian Government soldiers. The looting stopped when 35 government trucks departed with supplies and equipment. They also took 6 United Nations armoured personnel carriers. The report said this incident appeared to have been very well organized and connected to the blockade of the Bihac headquarters in Coralici earlier in the night. The United Nations continued to deplore such acts of violence and armed robbery against unarmed United Nations soldiers.

In another development, Croatian forces pulling out of areas in northwestern Bosnia due to revert to Serb control as a result of the Dayton Agreements, were reported to be looting and burning homes in their wake. A United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) spokesman said there were reports of houses being burned in Mrkonjic Grad and Sipovo.

Otherwise, the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina was generally quiet with some firing incidents and warring faction activity, the spokesman said. Restrictions of movement were still being experienced in some parts.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has said that member States had a unique forum for dialogue in the United Nations. The Secretary-General's comments came in a lecture delivered in Ottawa, Canada as part of the World Leaders series, hosted by the United Nations Association of Canada and the Canadian Committee for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali said many of the old assumptions had faded and as such new dimensions must be achieved. The global phenomenon of democratization must be addressed in all its dimensions, within and among States. In the United Nations, the Secretary-General said Member States had a means to deal with global problems, among them countering international crime, drugs and disease, finding the sustainable balance between the economy and the environment. Today, more than ever he said, the nations of the world confronted problems undeniably global in dimension. No single nation, acting alone, could achieve a lasting solution. The United Nations helped to define the common interest.

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The Secretary-General leaves New York over the weekend on a trip to Africa which will take him to Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Benin and Cote d'Ivoire. A United Nations spokesman said the Secretary-General would hold talks with the leaders of those countries and also attend the Francophonie Summit in Cotonou, Benin next Friday.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has called on the international community to demonstrate its solidarity with the people of Sierra Leone. In a report on the situation in Sierra leone, the Secretary-General said that while the situation in Sierra Leone was generally characterised by conflict, human suffering and economic decline, there were some positive emerging trends, which, if assisted, would contribute to the re-establishment of peace and stability.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali said the ongoing process of democratization, particularly the elections set for next February, was a significant element in this development and worthy of the support of the international community. The Secretary-General said the internal conflict that had raged for the last four years had damaged or destroyed much of the vital physical and social infrastructure of the country. Some initial steps must be taken now to signal the international community's commitment to assist Sierra Leone's democratization process.

In this connection, the Secretary-General has instructed the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to field a team of experts to prepare, in collaboration with the Government, a coordinated and workable action plan for the demobilization and reintegration of combatants. He has also instructed the Electoral Assistance Division to work closely with other UN agencies to assist in coordinating international observers during the elections and in strengthening national observer groups.

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Representatives of 150 governments will meet in Vienna to consider further reductions in methyl bromide and other ozone-depleting chemicals in accordance with the Vienna Convention signed ten years ago.

Under the Convention's Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, governments had agreed to phase out the major chemicals that destroyed the ozone in the stratosphere. These included chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), methyl chloroform and carbon.

Ratified by 150 countries, the Montreal Protocol contains separate phase-out schedules for developing countries, industrialized countries and countries with economies in transition. However, these time-tables were made flexible by the "essential use" exemptions, which allowed countries to apply

for an exemption to consume a limited quality of such chemicals. Several countries have applied for exemption.

A key proposal is an amendment to the Montreal Protocol to phase out methyl bromide, the most important ozone-depleting chemical whose phase-out has not yet been agreed upon. But because no alternatives for its uses are available at present, some countries have argued against its control.

Other concerns that will be addressed at the forthcoming meeting include accelerating the phase-out by both developing and industrialized countries of certain relevant chemicals, dumping, illegal traffic and uncontrolled production of those substances. There are also financial considerations on the agenda. Developing countries need financial assistance to enable them to switch to ozone-friendly chemicals.

"The risk we face is that our apparent success in tackling this issue over the last ten years is causing complacency," said Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNDP). She urged people to understand that the ozone problem was not yet solved and the ozone layer would not recover unless emissions were controlled and phased out.

About 500 participants are expected at the two-week session. Among them, there will be representatives from parties and observers from non-parties, industry, environmental non-governmental organizations and collaborating organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the World Bank, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

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A prospective doubling of the population of the Asia-Pacific region by the year 2040 could bring about an ecological disaster. Policy-makers, non-governmental organizations, media representatives and business people from some 40 countries concerned at the outlook, met this week at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, to work out a plan of action to be adopted by their Environmental Ministers.

The Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Adrianus Mooy, said despite Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and numerous bilateral and multilateral treaties, the global environment, particularly that of Asia and the Pacific, continued to deteriorate. He blamed that predicament on continued poverty, unsustainable economic growth and a massive increase in population.

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Non-governmental organizations would be working closely with the media for a consensus on sustainable development and discussing their respective roles in reversing current trends.

The Ministers will join their delegations on 27 November for a "regional earth summit" to adopt the Regional Action Programme for Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development, 1996-2000, designed to meet the challenge.

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The United Nations Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD) has introduced a new online information service which builds on and integrates earlier DPCSD initiatives on the Internet World Wide Web.

The basic service, which includes reports of proceedings with hypertext links, parliamentary documentation, official statements, public information material, and customized links to other resources, will be continually expanded and updated to bring daily, unfiltered updates of relevant United Nations proceedings to the world.

The service is available at on the United Nations Home page on the World Wide Web (http://www.un.org).

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